

Talbot Centre

Working Systemically with Families and the Community to enhance recovery

1. TC works with children young people and their families, its located on Buckingham St (just up the road from SAOL), celebrated 30th Anniversary last year. We are part of the HSE Addiction Service. services. **My goal in this presentation is to give a flavour of how we Work Systemically with Families and the Community to enhance recovery. .**

Mission Statement..... Develop .Supportive relationships those affected by drugs and alcohol.

We tick the boxes for the title of the symposium regarding Making **connections, attachment and relationality**. That's what we do.

2. (Brofenbrenner overhead)

In practice we work with the system those involved in the young person's life in particular the family (not with the child or young person) in isolation.

The other word in the title of the conference is '**recovery**'. More often we talk about prevention. TC is of course about recovery.

We would resonate with the definition of recovery noted in Soilse Research; that 'recovering from addiction' involves "**multiple recoveries, not just addiction but also from a lifetime of exclusion, emotional turmoil and 'fractured identity'**" (p.21.Soilse, keane, Mc Aleenan and Barry). So in Talbot, we are involved in multiple levels and contexts in people's lives including, education, housing, employment so to enhance inclusion, and support them with emotional and health issues.

How and with whom do we work:

- *YP using drugs and*
- *Prevention work children affected by the drug use of others... usually parents..*

3. Consider young people presenting to Talbot Centre using drugs, some experimenting, dabbling, other more dependent even chaotic

What do we do:

develop supportive relationship / make connections

- with **young person using drugs**
- with the **people in their lives who have a problem with their drug taking**

Not easy to engage and get YP involved in a service like the TC. Very few young people **ever knock at the front door** to say they want to stop using drugs. More often they want more not less drugs. Difficulty very often is **getting them to the starting blocks**. If we get them in the door we can work on the relationship. They

may come because they feel **pushed** by parents, School, Probation, JLO, and want a court report. What we do know is **that it is vital to include parents**, families, those in the larger system in the community, schools, youth services and clubs, Youthreach, We often say that: (slide)

(Overhead) *It is too narrow to work with young person in isolation from their family, It is also too narrow to work with families in isolation from their community*

It is thus essential to include families and community (as much as possible when working with young people using drugs. Working with 'resistant' young people requires a **'Push and pull' dynamic** (push as noted that somebody else sees their drug use is a problem) and **pull where we** meet the young person at a human and genuine level, where as workers we tune into their interests, worries, anxieties personal and practical needs. ...Involves;

- individual Care Plan for each person,
- appreciating no single way to work also
- considering **levels of maturity** for adolescents,

This requires much **patience, perseverance, genuine interest in their welfare. In practice this means follow up calls, for missed appointments, texting to remind, hanging in with them, and sometimes a tension between 'enabling' and 'empowerment'**, support v challenge . Help them- to **stay safe**.....

4. Let me give a recent example ...(Will change some details to protect confidentiality)... but this is typical....."Young 14 year old 'out of control' .. thumping others in school corridor, messing with weed, hanging around with 'a bad crowd', bullying his own siblings. Now suspended from school". **Community Youth worker** refers them to us.

What do? All invited to family meeting including youth worker. Everybody turns up Mother, 12 year old brother and 11 year old sister but no 14 year old drug user...Mother begins by saying, ' that fells told me not to go to that place?...And you did? No 14 year old telling me what to do? Young brother says he was threatened by him if he came to Talbot? How come you came? Don't know? He hits me anyway?At times disturbing conversation.....Ultimately who is in charge.....Will the Hospital, Prison or Social Work department become involved in this.....

My colleague in Centre has since made connections with the boy separately with youth worker, I continue to meet the family. **This work in prevention and recovery is slow, no quick fix, tedious, involves intensive relationship building with family and other services involved with young person.**

5. (Overhead) Our flower from 30th Anniversary booklet, shows what this involves in practice...**Different settings in which we work.....No simple single way to work with complex realities.....At core involves making connections and developing relationships with family and larger network.....work in**

formal and informal manner..... collaborative inter agency work, schools etc, advocacy, counselling one to one, different settings.....outreach, prison, home hospital visits,,, family therapy,

4. (Overhead) *The other focus of our work is prevention work with children at risk not using drugs and their families*

Child and Family work.....Family Intervention Programme.families referred by drug services, social work, Family Support Service, PHNs and other community services.....Again the goal is developing supportive relationships' in particular **fostering the relationship between parents and their children...** art, cooking, activities, trips, conversations etc

Recovery is something that begins in the pram even in the womb.....Again 'Multiple Recoveries', involves supporting mother pregnancy (to get to her appointments) living accommodation, housing, relationship difficulties with families with partners, ('fractured identity') Now a mother as well as child.....This work can involve intensive ongoing work with families some long standing families over many years. Strengthening the Family Work

People who generally have most influence in child's life are parents and families. The children that come to the Talbot Centre, like all children are affected by the world their parents come from...Often they are those socially excluded, in emotional stress and not knowing whether they are coming or going.

5. (Overhead). I will conclude by reflecting on a Mosaic in the hall of the Talbot Centre. (gift from prisoners in Mountjoy).

Depicts; 2 doves and one snake above them. Original inspiration is reference 'be wise as serpents and gentle as doves' Both stand separate and together, snake and dove at the same time. (snake easily gobble them up) Not enough only to be gentle need also be wise.

Like opposites.... paradox

These are the two ingredients necessary for connectedness and building relationships.

...**dove..... gentle**, empathy, respect and also

...**snakes.....wisdom for self care, not to get overwhelmed, over involved, burnt out..... cunning to 'be wide'** have capacity to critique and challenge and appreciate inequalities in society, and values that are oppressive from the dominant culture including the local culture. This mosaic captures the core ingredients necessary for making **connections...and maintaining them.....**

In short working systemically with Families and the Community to enhance recovery requires bothGentleness and Wisdom.

